



## TEACHING PRONUNCIATION OF GLOBAL ENGLISH TO ESL BUSINESS STUDENTS

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**ABSTRACT:** *This study focused on the implications of teaching of pronunciation to business students. It sought to identify the trends in Global English and investigate factors on the difficulties of learners on speaking English and the remedies to overcome their problems arising from the complication of learning the target language. In the daily classroom observation, majority of the students have difficulty in speaking English correctly. Apart from insufficient knowledge on rules of grammar, limited vocabulary, and syntax, the students have not developed excellent speaking skills because they lack the courage to stand before other learners to explain their views when need arises. It is at this point that correct pronunciation is given closer attention to adequately train good speakers who are the key players in the business world. Given more time and closer attention to train students in speaking confidently spells beneficial business undertaking through global communication. English as international language plays a vital role in developing the position of any country particularly in the field of business. Its importance as the language of understanding is considered as the major avenue wherein majority of developments in the world are captured through different methods of communicating through English language.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Global English, English as International Language, Spoken English*

### INTRODUCTION

Developing English language communication skills is critical in this era of globalization and cut-throat competition especially in the world of business. There is a great impact for any employee who has developed competency in business language because he has more chances of climbing up his career ladder easily. And that competency applies to businesses as a whole for everything is undertaken through competitive communication both in oral and written method. According to the study of Bersin and Associates, it reveals that organizations that are able to communicate their strategies in clear and precise manner are 113 times more likely to achieve higher levels of profitability and efficiency. In a similar study conducted by Global English reveals that 97% of employees surveyed believe that poor communication as a result of inadequate business language skills can create misunderstanding. As a consequence of poor business skills, it may result to a negative impact on sales, profitability and efficiency of operations in the organizations. So, for one to succeed in business, managers and workers alike must focus on improving business language skills.

Achieving high competency in business language skills lets anyone communicate with peers, subordinates, supervisors, and clients easily and clearly. Ultimately this brings higher productivity and heightened profitability.



In the advent of many different kinds of international English, language teachers face several questions on the use of native speaker's pronunciation models in the teaching of English. Like the contemporary updates of classroom pronunciation activities undertaken and elaborated by Jenkins, J. (2002) on Lectures in Sociolinguistics and Phonology, it was stressed that there is a great impact on the teaching of pronunciation to learners who prepare for the competitive world of business. The educators in the different parts of the world are challenged to upgrade and take the matter as serious concern to train learners in such a way that they can keep up with the trends in spoken language. English may not be the most spoken language in the world, but it is the official language in a large number of countries. It is the dominant business language and it has become almost necessity for people to speak English if they are to enter a global workforce.

In the past few decades, English has emerged as the global language of trade and commerce affecting many key aspects of business in the modern world. It has become the standard for all important official communications in an increasingly large number of countries with a wide variety of native languages. Though written English continues to spread as the major medium through which both small businesses and large corporations do business, the importance of the spoken language plays major role in business successes.

English is the common business language so whether one businessman likes it or not s/he is to learn the language to be competitive. On top of all other business activities, one should remember that written communication is as important as verbal. Thereby, it is imperative that language teachers must design a more active and challenging speaking lessons for all learners which are focused on common topics in business in conversational manner.

In the Philippines alone, language educators have a hard time teaching the learners specifically those belonging to certain groups wherein some of the English sounds are not present in their local dialects. The need to master definite sounds in uttering words in English demands great practice in order to conform to the spoken global English. The learners may not perfect in an instant but the practice will aid them to master over time and be able to deliver exactly the sound they may want to produce and be understood.

In the book of Pennycook (2017), he sought out ways of intelligent reasons about the position of English in the world in order for him and other educators to understand the call of work differently. He focused with the limitations he see in teaching English language in applied linguistics, which he calls the discourse of English as an International Language (EIL). He introduces the discourse of EIL and suggests that this discourse tends to look at the spread of English as natural, neutral and beneficial.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This classroom research uses observations and recordings of students' actual activities and its purpose is to identify implications of teaching pronunciation of global English to business students. Specifically, the following questions are answered:

1. What is global English?
2. What are the implications of EIL for pronunciation?



3. What useful exercises are needed to employ to keep the students learning and talking?
4. What are the implications of teaching pronunciation to ESL business students?

## **WHAT IS GLOBAL ENGLISH?**

Nowadays, the term 'global English' is being used progressively extensive in all parts of the world. It is the medium wherein people use it as a means of understanding and demonstrating that English is spoken in every part of the world to maintain the connection of communication. In that way, speakers understand one another within a particular country who share a first language and across speakers from different countries whose first languages are different from 'global English'.

English is not only spoken in countries like UK, America, Australia, and New Zealand but also by those who learn English in order to communicate with native speakers. It is also widely spoken among many non-native speakers from countries like the Philippines, India, Singapore and other non-native speakers from a wide range of countries that consider English as their primary international language. This last use of English is often referred to as 'English as an International Language' or EIL.

The interference of the learners' mother tongue and the country's national language in the learning activities of students presents problem as to mastery and use. Nunan (2012) presents the results of an investigation wherein it identified the place of English in the curriculum in several countries in the Asia-Pacific region. It discusses the impact and importance of English as a global language having considerable impact on policies and practices in all countries surveyed. It also reveals significant problems, including confusion and inconsistency, at the level of policy, particularly regarding the issue of age of initial instruction, inequity regarding access to effective language instruction, inadequately trained and skilled teachers, and a disjunction between curriculum rhetoric and pedagogical reality.

## **WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS OF EIL FOR PRONUNCIATION?**

In the countries where English is used as their native tongues, they differ in so many ways how to produce sounds that pertain to particular words. In as much as the Philippines have many different languages in the regions, an argument has risen to which language teachers and learners are also confused which among the native speakers do we pattern the sound we produce? Does it make any difference if learners have to pattern the sounds/accents the native speakers produce in the countries like Australia, New Zealand, America, and UK?

It is at this point that intelligible pronunciation for EIL must not be the focus and gauge for mutual understanding when speakers are both non-native speakers of English. The native speakers on the other hand, would not mind at all if the features of the sound in English produced or uttered by non-native speakers are not exactly the same as they do. It is encouraged however that learners of second language must pronounce words in a way that they are being understood. In Cagayan Valley alone, language teachers deal with students



from many different origins of dialects that even speaking the Tagalog language would be peculiarly spoken. The same observations surfaced as the learners speak the English language. And so, extensive exercises are required to check on the difficulty.

What useful exercises are needed to employ to keep the students learning and talking?

After the students' course in Speech and Oral Communication, they must have been ready to freely speak to fellow students using the target language. But more often than not, there appear to be a deafening silence every time they are asked to say their views or agree/disagree to any ideas presented in the class. As educators encourage learners to keep on trying to master the speaking skills, many would still prefer to stay silent and keep the idea within for fear that s/he would be laughed at if commits mistakes. It is a disheartening discovery of the teachers that many learners have brilliant ideas when they write but fall short of confidence when spoken activity is at hand.

So, in order to arrest the pressing difficulty, a classroom rule has been laid and agreed by students. The principle of English Only policy must be observed all the time. It was a difficult task because some would prefer to be quiet rather than laughed at or being embarrassed. In the latter days that passed though, some already have started using the target language jokingly using with some faces to deliver the message to the person concerned. When there is a need to check on students' proper pronunciation, model exercises are given for emphasis on the correctness of saying the words. The focus on producing sounds of words in vowels and consonants are also one of the main activities especially words with **f** sound that oftentimes being produced as **p** like the word **fire** would be pronounced **pire**, **vote** to **bote** for which the listener would ask what the speaker would mean to get what is delivered in speaking. In some other times, learners would also interchange sound of /e/ and /i/ or vice versa, e.g. **melt/milt**, **mix/mex**, **milk/melk**, etc. Also some sounds of /u/ and /o/ are some of the common mistakes of learners with first language from different cultural origins like Tagalogs, Pangasinenses, Ilokanos, Ybanag, Itawes, Visayans, etc. When educators are already faced with this problem of sounds, we cannot get away from funny realizations that learners are able to speak observing correctness of grammar rules but their statements are produced just like the sound they speak in their native tongue and sometimes they also tend to translate their statements according to the structure they construct statements in their native tongue which is not the same with how sentences are constructed in English language. Aside from modeling the correct pronunciation of words, students are asked to watch English movies or listen to music sung by native English speakers or tune in to radio stations anchored by English speakers. In recitations too, students are reminded not to code-switch or code-mix while explaining a point, and they are not allowed to speak Tagalog even if they have brilliant ideas about the topic being discussed. Code-mixing and code-switching are practices done by speakers who are bilingual. They tend to combine two languages in speaking. An example is when a Filipino Tagalog/English bilingual says: *This morning nakita ko si teacher kasama ang kanyang anak in going to school riding the tricycle.* The sentence presents an example of code mixing. The speaker has used two languages in one sentence beginning with English words adding Tagalog terms in the middle and finishes with a phrase in English terms. In many cases, some Filipino speakers tend to code switch in between statements specially when trying to explain a point by beginning a



sentence in Tagalog and then switch to another statement using the English language or vice versa.

A *code* may be a language or a variety or style of a language; the term *code-mixing* emphasizes hybridization, and the term *code-switching* emphasizes movement from one language to another. Mixing and switching probably occur to some extent in the speech of all bilinguals, so that there is a sense in which a person capable of using two languages, A and B, has three systems available for use: A, B, and C (a range of hybrid forms that can be used with comparable bilinguals but not with monolingual speakers of A or B). There are four major types of switching: (1) Tag-switching, in which tags and certain set phrases in one language are inserted into an utterance otherwise in another, as when a Tagalog/English bilingual says: *It's a nice day, di ba? (di ba? isn't it)*. (2) Intra-sentential switching, in which switches occur within a clause or sentence boundary, as when a Tagalog/English bilingual says: *Win o talo join in the game (win or lose join ...)*. (3) Inter-sentential switching, in which a change of language occurs at a clause or sentence boundary, where each clause or sentence is in one language or the other, as when a Tagalog/English bilingual says: *Sometimes I'll start a sentence in English at tatapusin sa tagalog* (and finish it in Tagalog). This last may also occur as speakers take turns. (4) Intra-word switching, in which a change occurs within a word boundary, such as in *macrash* (English *crash* with the Tagalog prefix *ma* which means *to*), *entrePinoy*s (Entre for entrepreneurs but preneurs was taken by PINOYS which a coin word for 'Filipinios') or *magenjoy* (English *enjoy* with the tagalog prefix *mag*, meaning 'to'). In many ways, Filipino speakers of English tend to do the different kinds of codes in language. They may either code-mix or code-switch which it would not sound good at all especially when other speakers do not have idea about the topic being discussed. On the other hand, the practice would serve something good specially when the purpose is for clarification of what is being discussed and the receiver gets better understanding of what is being said.

## IMPLICATIONS OF TEACHING PRONUNCIATION TO BUSINESS STUDENTS

Speaking skills in business is a very useful tool for it enables one to communicate with anybody in the global market. It defines probable business successes and gives satisfaction to the key player in any business endeavor. In a world where English is used for international communication, pronunciation and grammar issues have been found to be cause of breakdowns in communication. People meet and converse with one another in every day undertakings. The only language they could understand each other is through English as Lingua Franca. That is the only choice that they would come across better understanding and meet in an agreement which is clear and intelligible. Though learners in places like the different provinces in the Philippines having multitude of mother tongues, teaching pronunciation in English is as important as teaching the rules in grammar because the sounds they produce would always surface in the manner they speak in their own tongues. The problem of miscommunication could arise the moment native English speakers



and other listeners/speakers (who take English as lingua franca or considered second language) could not fathom what is being uttered. Though it is encouraged that learners pattern their accents to the native speakers of English through activities in listening and speaking exercises, it is still beyond perfection because of the mother tongue. The role of the English language teacher has a great impact in the development of students' speaking abilities. Brita Haycraft (1993), stresses that in speaking, intonations and pronunciations convey the meaning and that both show our feelings about anything being discussed. The more interested you are: the more your voice tends to move. The less it moves, the less interested you seem. Many learners' main problem is flat intonation due to being too timid to speak aloud for fear of making grammar mistakes. This doesn't help them in real life conversations or when asking for something. In my experience, a teacher's praise for expressive speaking, even with faulty grammar, raises learners' confidence and makes learning much more lively and effective. In this context, as observed in real classroom situations, the extensive teaching of pronunciation requires great deal of practice and mastery to become intelligible whether speaking with native speakers of English or others who take English as Lingua Franca.

## **RESULTS**

In the process of research, it has been observed and analyzed how interactions between non-native speakers of English are undertaken in the class. The aim was to find out which features of British or American English pronunciation are essential for intelligible pronunciation, and which are not. The findings have been formed into a pronunciation core for teaching which is known as the Lingua Franca Core. This is to indicate that it is intended as a guide for lingua franca interactions, not interactions between a native and non-native speaker of English. The main features of the Lingua Franca Core are important observe in the likes of the following features: All the consonants are important except for 'th' sounds as in 'thin' and 'this', Consonant clusters are important at the beginning and in the middle of words; the cluster in the word 'string' cannot be simplified to 'sting' or 'tring' and remain intelligible; The contrast between long and short vowels is important. For example, the difference between the vowel sounds in 'sit' and 'seat'; the nuclear (or tonic) stress is also essential. This is the stress on the most important word (or syllable) in a group of words. For example, there is a difference in meaning between 'My son uses a computer' which is a neutral statement of fact and 'My SON uses a computer', where there is an added meaning (such as that another person known to the speaker and listener does not use a computer).

There are many other items which are regularly taught on English pronunciation courses appear not to be essential for intelligibility in EIL interactions. Some are in the 'th' sounds which oftentimes practically understood by anyone irrespective of the origin of the listener/conversant. The vowel sounds produced by different speakers do not have same quality depending on the background of the speakers. Say one comes from India who is conversing to one from Germany. Naturally they need to train their ears to familiarize with each other how they could connect and understand the relayed messages. The many dialects in the Philippines are blamed for the errors in the spoken language, e.g. pack vs. puck wherein these are pronounced the same if one comes from Ilokano, Visayan,



Pangasinense group. Even the weak words such as 'to', 'of' and 'from' are oftentimes pronounced as schwa instead of their full quality. Other alterations committed by speakers extray for X-ray, ramabout for run-about, etc. Many other concerns for Lingua Franca core are word stress, pitch movement, and stress timing.

All the observed speaking weaknesses are important guides for listeners of speakers who are native of the language for purposes of intelligibility or they could pattern to make an accent more appropriate and is pleasing to hear.

### RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Educators must give the students the choice to learn, acquire, and master pronunciation relevant to international use and close to the accent of native speakers which becomes intelligible rather than training and teaching them in the traditional pronunciation the old syllabuses offer. The primary goal of pronunciation teaching is to enable learners to acquire an accent that is as close as possible to that of the native speaker. Expose the learners in the original sounds the native speakers produce by having them listen to radios, television stations, or internet that offer authentic materials in developing speaking skills in the target language.
2. For intelligibility, non-native speakers of an international language may not copy exactly the sounds/accents of native speakers as long as they deliver clear and easy-to-understand words across oral communication. After all, native speakers also produce different sounds depending on the region where they belong.
3. Educators should expose students to plenty of exposures in their pronunciation lessons in the classroom. The use of multi-media materials would be a brilliant way to let the learners be familiar with the sounds. In this manner, even learners have not yet mastered the core features of EIL they can easily understand a native speaker delivering a message.

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